

M. Mitchison

January 31, 1957

Dr. Harold P. Rusch
Department of Oncology

Dear Harold:

Van Potter has mentioned that you are having staff conversations in your department a propos a new appointee in the general area of cell biology and immunology. The name of N.A. Mitchison at once leaped to mind, and after hearing his area of interest, Van reacted with sufficient interest to warrant my collecting some more information. I have met Mitchison several times, and have been in some correspondence with him since, and have no hesitation in recommending him to you. This has an admitted selfish basis: our interests are just so complementary that I would look forward to being able to work more closely with him.

I can't give you much biographical information off hand-- I suspect he is within a year or two of my own age (31); his present position is as a lecturer, perhaps just senior lecturer, at the University of Edinburgh, Dept. of Zoology. This means it would take an associate professorship, or conceivably an assistant-professorship with a promise, to get him, if he is available at all. Of this I have no direct knowledge except that the academic hierarchy in Britain is none too rewarding, and he may have been spoiled by his post-doctoral residence in the U.S. (which was about 1952-55, at Indiana with Sonneborn, and then at Bar Harbor with Snell). I will be visiting Edinburgh in mid-March and can probably learn more then.

Here is a partial bibliography:

1953: The passage of antibodies into the intestine in rabbits. Q.J.Exp. Physiol. 38:139-150.

The effect on the offspring of maternal immunization in mice. J. Genetics 51:406-420. (no erythroblastosis because of delayed development of RBC antigens.)

Passive transfer of transplantation immunity. Nature 171:267.

1955 Evidence against micronuclear mutations as the sole basis for death in...ultra-violet irradiated Paramecium aurelia. Genetics 40:61-7

Iso-antibody against a tumor. Transpl. Bull. 2:93-94.

Studies on the immunological response to foreign tumor transplants in the mouse. (I-III). J. Exp. Med. 102:157-...204.

1956 The colonization of irradiated tissue by transplanted spleen cells.
Br. J. Exp. Path. 37:239-247.


Antigens of heterozygous tumors as material for the study of cell
heredity. Proc. Roy. Phys. Soc. 25: 45-48.

[The last item had some special personal interest for me, as it anticipated
the principal suggestion I had made at the Ascites Tumor Conference (publ.
N.Y.Acad. Sci. 1956) for genetic study of this material.]

Needless to say, I will be deeply interested in your reactions.

There is the problem of contact with him, despite my own forthcoming visit
(and Dean Bowers said something about visiting Scotland later this year too.)
Mitchison was one of the prospective speakers at a Symposium on Medical Genetics
that is being contemplated here, but that won't come off for the best part of
a year at least.

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

CC: VRP

P.S. Don't confuse this Mitchison with his brother, who's Professor of
Zoology, or another brother (D.A.) who's a bacteriologist in London.